

15 May 1960

COLLAPSE OF THE SUMMIT

Christopher, Christopher, where are you going, Christopher Robin?

"Just up to the top of the hill,
Upping and upping until
I am right on the top of the hill,"

Said Christopher Robin.

Christopher, Christopher, why are you going, Christopher Robin?

There's nothing to see, so when
You've got to the top, what then?
"Just down to the bottom again,"

Said Christopher Robin.

The main points to emerge from the still-born Summit conference are, on the Soviet side, these:

1. Khrushchev refused to negotiate on the topics of the conference--Berlin, Germany, disarmament, and East-West relations--unless President Eisenhower apologized for the U2 flights, agreed to punish those responsible, and promised to stop further flights.

2. He withdrew the invitation to the President to visit the Soviet Union next month.

3. He proposed that the Summit conference be held in six to eight months.

4. He said that the nuclear test ban and disarmament talks in Geneva could continue.

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5. He again threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany.

On the Western side:

1. The President refused to apologize for the flights or to punish those responsible, but he did promise they would not continue as long as he was President.

2. He announced that he would present to the UN his open skies proposal for aerial inspection, which would make further espionage unnecessary.

We are surely too close to the events to know with certainty how to interpret them, particularly in respect to Soviet position. One interpretation is ^{offered} ~~advanced~~ here which may contain part of the truth.

These remarks will deal first, with Khrushchev's attitude toward the Summit meeting, then with his estimate of where he stands now, and lastly, with a course of action he may take.

Attitude toward the Summit:

To get at least a solid start in analyzing what Khrushchev has been doing and may do in the future, he has undoubtedly been working for Western concessions in the Berlin and German questions.

Furthermore, he looks upon himself as the ablest Soviet negotiator--the one who can get the most out of the West. He consequently thought in terms of a Summit meeting. The date of this week's Summit

In recent weeks, however, through statements of the Western leaders and communiques from Western conferences, it appeared that the West was not going to take a "liberal, conciliatory approach" at the Summit, but was, rather, going to adhere largely to its previous, firm positions.

For all the talk about disarmament being the No. 1 topic, the most practical issue was obviously Berlin. Khrushchev decided late last month to have another try at moving the West on this issue. He recognized that the ~~main obstacle to disarmament was~~ the

West's position on Berlin had two foundations: Western military strength, and public support, not only in the NATO countries, but elsewhere in the world.

While Khrushchev himself does not want a war with the West, he feels convinced that the West equally does not want war. In these circumstances, it might be useful to rattle the saber, it being always possible to stop if necessary. So he rattled the saber in Baku on 25 April, warning the West that it would not get to Berlin by land, water, or air if it refused a German peace treaty and the Soviets signed a separate one with the GDR.

The intent in this speech was to persuade the West to review its working papers, and to come up with some meaty concessions (the NATO Council of Ministers had not yet given its final approval to the Western plans).

Even before the NATO meeting had a chance to show whether Khrushchev's warnings were having effect, great good luck came to him in the form of the U2. This obviously had many potential uses. One was that it afforded a magnificent opportunity to undermine the second foundation of Western policy--public support. This support has been compounded of many elements, among them the rather widespread beliefs:

- 1 - That the West (especially the US) is sincerely anxious for peace, and would not undertake aggressive actions;

2 - that the West is on good legal grounds in its arguments with the Soviets, who customarily twist law out of recognizable shape;

3 - that the West is honest and truth-telling.

The U2 case had the potentiality for casting doubt on all these beliefs, particularly in countries outside NATO. Flying over Soviet territory--especially a bold, border-to-border flight over the heartland--might well seem less than a peaceful action, and was certainly against international law. Moreover, the US was trapped into lying about the case.

If all these points could be driven home through the most dramatic type of propaganda, not only would world opinion probably force the US to discontinue this objectionable activity, but the drop in the West's moral credit might well make it impossible for the West to hold its firm line on Berlin and Germany.

People might begin to wonder whether the West really had, as it said, a right to maintain an island in the center of the GDR--an island, incidentally, which might be dedicated to the same espionage purposes as the U2 flight. It might wonder whether the Soviets weren't on good legal ground in contending that a peace treaty was necessary 15 years after the war's end. It might wonder whether the West had any right to transit the territory of East Germany while refusing to recognize and deal with the border guards of that country. Might not the Western contention that it had such a right be just as high-handed

and wrong as the US contention that it could overfly the Soviet Union? (Khrushchev could not, of course, allow this US contention to go unchallenged, and he would demand assurances on this score; but the objectives growing out of the U2 case went way beyond merely getting assurances, and would have been pursued even if the US had never implied that the flights would be continued.)

The thought undoubtedly leaped to Khrushchev's mind that if the West--and esp. the US--could be revealed as selfishly and dangerously pursuing its own interests in disregard of law and the rights of other nations, in other words, if it could be shown to be as immoral as the Soviet Union, then the great advantage of favorable public opinion which the West has had in the Berlin controversy would be lost, and the Soviets' superior geographic situation would become the dominant factor.

Khrushchev may have still expected to turn the U2 case to this kind of advantage in Berlin negotiations at the Summit when his emissaries in Paris gave the French government a new plan for Berlin on 9 May. It was a plan which would look generous if the West, indeed, had no rights, for it permitted the West to remain in Berlin two years more--which would be essentially a long phase-out time.

But other uses of the U2 occurred to Khrushchev that seemed to outweigh the importance of negotiating now on Berlin. If the Summit had seemed desirable because it demonstrated Khrushchev's parity with the Western chiefs, esp. Eisenhower, how much more desirable would it not be

if it could demonstrate Khrushchev's superiority--if it could show that the Western potentates came to a conference when he summoned them (actually, the Berlin crisis being the basic reason for the Summit), and that they went away when he dismissed them; that they would talk and do business when he felt like it; that he could hear their confession of sins and mete out penance. He could arrange a 20th century Canossa.

This grand vision of humbling the West led Khrushchev into the approach which he adopted. Its effectiveness would not be greatly diminished if Eisenhower would not eat crow. A good segment of the world would probably feel that Khrushchev had every right to demand an apology, and even those that didn't see this would understand that Khrushchev was now the most powerful man on earth.

If the President didn't beg forgiveness, the conference would ^{be} wrecked, but this would/quite all right since it would not ~~had~~ have had any positive fruits anyway.

And in the debate over the U2 case, particularly if it wrecked the conference, recriminations would break out in the Western camp which would destroy the unity that had been built so carefully since last year's Geneva meeting.

K's estimate of his present situation:

Khrushchev probably considers that he has carried out his conceptions brilliantly: he has unmasked the West as wicked and presumably robbed it of its aura of righteousness, he has made the Western chiefs dance to his tune, and has provided enough grounds for internal Western debates which hopefully will lead to significant divisions.

It is only a temporary phenomenon if the Western press is currently denouncing him for boorish behavior.

Ebullient with this sense of success, the feeling of having the West on the run, Khrushchev, like a good general, will want to pursue his advantage. He has suggested holding a Summit conference in six to eight months. The lapse of time, he says, is to allow the leaders of "a country to analyze what kind of responsibility they placed upon themselves in declaring an aggressive course in their relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries". In reality, the lapse of time is intended to effect a modification of Western policies.

The loss of moral credit itself should force changes in our Berlin and German position. A further loss of diplomatic strength, in Khrushchev's opinion, should result from the dissensions which he expects to arise now in the Western camp. When the passions of the moment have subsided, there may be a cool appraisal by America's allies resulting ⁱⁿ ~~as~~ the conclusion that, US policy is on the wrong track. Or, perhaps equally possible, a new US administration may be elected in November which will have a much more flexible view of central European problems.

Possible Soviet Course:

If Khrushchev wants to assure himself of forward movement, however, taking advantage of his initiative and what he hopes will be chagrin, confusion, and disagreement in the West, it seems probable that he will

start some action himself to see that when and if there is a Summit meeting, there will be a likelihood that the West will come much closer to his terms.

His best sector for maneuvering is Berlin. It would be ideal from his point of view if he could set up a fait accompli, which the West would have no practical alternative but to ratify. This is a dangerous strategy, but Khrushchev might adopt it in the knowledge that the dangers are entirely created by himself, and that he can ease off at any time and to any extent indicated.

With the general intention of taking forward steps, he can play it by ear, not attempting to implement a hard and fast blueprint.

While he wants a variety of changes within West Berlin, he is in no position to effect them unilaterally. Where his leverage comes in on the access routes. But it has been a long time since he has talked of simply transferring controls to the East Germans. The legal cover for doing this has come to be the signing of a separate peace treaty with the GDR, and in Paris he warned that his "pen was ready" to sign the treaty whenever it suited him.

If he did sign any time in the coming months, it would be possible for him to stop there, and not transfer controls. But this would look somewhat ridiculous, robbing the treaty of any practical significance. The more likely expectation is that the East Germans would be given jurisdiction over access when the treaty was concluded, which, incidentally, would probably be done in a large conference of the Warsaw Pact states, to which the Western Powers

would have been invited. Their refusal to attend would constitute the justification for Moscow's proceeding with a separate treaty.

With the transfer of controls, the West would be confronted with the situation with which it was threatened in November 1958, and for which it prepared contingency plans.

To set up a situation which would inevitably launch a series of steps resulting in armed conflict would be contrary to Khrushchev's intentions, as they are currently estimated in Washington. Khrushchev's aim would be to arrange a fait accompli which did not explode in war, but which gave the diplomats a different set of facts to work with when they met in conference--a set of facts favoring Moscow.

Could this be done? Particularly, could the situation be altered so as to : 1 - bring the East Germans officially into the access picture, 2 - retire the Soviets from this scene, and 3 - make the dependence of the West on Communist sufferance quite clear?

If the peace treaty were concluded and the controls transferred, the contingency plans bar our dealing with the East Germans. If we encounter East German instead of Soviet guards, we demand to talk to the Soviets. If the Soviets are not produced, we refuse to show our passports or travel orders to the East Germans. The theory of this refusal is that once we acknowledged the right of the East Germans to control the routes, we would subject ourselves to any conditions the East Germans might in the future impose--inspections, limitations on numbers of trucks or trains, demands for diplomatic recognition as a condition to further travel, outright prohibition of travel, etc.

And in the event of these harassments, we would have no recourse, since we had no agreements with the East Germans guaranteeing access, and we could not argue from our basic right, i.e., the conquest of Germany, to have access to Berlin since this right, in the Soviet view, would have become outmoded with the complete end of the occupation era denoted by conclusion of a peace treaty.

Our protests being unavailing, we would turn back rather than deal with the East Germans, and would then consider what action to take. Consultations would be held between the US, UK, and France. The US might be in favor of a "land probe"--an attempt to proceed ignoring the East Germans--to see if they would, indeed, dare to step us. If they used force, we would then withdraw, and consider the problem further. However, the UK and France might not sanction such a land probe, and we might be unwilling to try it without their support.

The next obvious move would be to protest to the Soviet authorities, in the same manner as in 1948. First there would be representations made in Berlin, and then, no doubt, in Moscow.

While the basic position of the Soviets would be that they were no longer involved in these matters, since authority lay with the East German government, they could if they chose, string out their dealings with us over a period of time, possibly pretending to act as mediators. They would thereby avoid pushing us to ultimate measures.

These explorations might take a week, two weeks, or several weeks, as they did in 1948. In this period the West would not arrive at a

solution of the problem. It might initiate a small airlift--a garrison airlift--to signify our intention to preserve access through some means. Such an airlift would not have to be on the grand scale of 1948 when the Allies were doing all the supplying of Berlin. Now, of course, German trucks, barges, and trains supply the civil population of Berlin. They already deal with the East Germans, and are not the immediate targets of changes in the access picture, though they would undoubtedly soon become the targets if Allied rights were knocked out.

If there were a definite date for a Summit conference, or even a conference on a lower level, and if a peace treaty and transfer of controls occurred shortly before this date, the problem would be unresolved, but, the Soviets would have confronted us with a new set of facts.

There would be a danger, of course, that we would not attend a conference under these circumstances, but such a refusal would seem unlikely to the Soviets since the only peaceful method we would have for dealing with the crisis would be that of negotiation. And the Soviets would be counting on public opinion to force our adherence to peaceful methods.

At such a conference, the Soviets would not risk provoking hostilities by saying that we could no longer travel to Berlin, but they would insist that they were completely out of the Berlin picture, as all the world could plainly see by reason of the peace treaty and the presence of the East Germans on the crossing points. Therefore, they

could no longer guarantee our access, but could only refer us to the East Germans, who, they were sure, would be "reasonable".

It would be made known to us, let us say, that the East Germans were prepared to pass our ~~leg~~ "legitimate" vehicles which ~~were~~ were moving "in accordance with accepted conditions". We would be told that this was extremely generous of the East German authorities who, after all, could not see that we had any business being in Berlin anyway, and who thought that there should be a free city devoid of Western forces.

We would object that such language as "legitimate" vehicles and "in accordance with accepted conditions" left judgment entirely up to the East Germans, whose good faith was certainly in doubt.

But the Soviets would shrug, tell us that this was the best deal we could get, and warn us that if we preferred instead to resort to force, we would be met by force.

The West would then be left pondering this proposition. The choice would be between dealing with the East Germans without any guarantees, or risking immediate conflict.

The Soviets would count on our being forced into a fragile arrangement with the East Germans. If we refused and called the Soviet bluff, they could back off in various ways--for example, by extending the time period during which we would travel under Soviet responsibility.

If it should happen that we tried a land probe, the Soviets could likewise refrain from pressing the ~~trigger~~ trigger, adopting instead an

entirely ~~diff~~ different tactic. The East Germans would be ordered to stand by and not ask for documents while Allied vehicles crossed GDR territory. The Communist ~~propa~~ propaganda apparatus would cry before the world that the West was aggressively violating the sovereignty of the GDR. Parallels would be drawn with the U2 case, and Moscow would expect world opinion to develop in support of the East German position.

All this is admittedly hypothetical, but it does suggest the possibility of the Soviets doing as Khrushchev said in his final press conference in Paris--that is, of approaching the Berlin problem "with greater resolve and urgency", of signing the separate peace treaty, and of presenting a future conference with a different situation.

Other Points:

There are, to be sure, a considerable number of other theories current as to why Khrushchev acted as he did in Paris. A very prominent theory is that Khrushchev acted under compulsion from the "hard course" Communists--probably the military in Moscow and perhaps also the Chinese--who disapprove of Khrushchev's detente and coexistence ideas. They did not want him dealing or compromising with the West and insisted that he break up the conference.

One difficulty with this theory is that until the conference, it was generally accepted that Khrushchev was firmly in the saddle, and only this month made important changes in the Moscow hierarchy which were beneficial to him. Second, the so-called detente policy hardly did any damage to the Soviet position, since it amounted to little more than

a pretense of good intentions coupled with admonitions to the West to solve outstanding issues on Soviet terms. Third, it is not necessary to "break up" an East-West conference; it is merely necessary, in order to protect Moscow's position, to adhere to established Soviet policies. And Khrushchev never gave any sign of a ~~significant~~ departure from those policies.

A final word should be said about the reactions so far to the events in Paris. Fortunately, most of the free world peoples, and especially the Europeans, are united in considering Khrushchev to be the villain of the piece. The only legitimate complaint he is considered to have had--the overflights--was, in the opinion of most people, removed when the President said the flights had ended. From that point on, the onus lay squarely on Khrushchev, whose conduct is almost totally condemned.

Briefing given to NACOM before Khrush talked in
Berlin.